(c) Government has stopped the issue of lustre lost wheat for distribution under Targetted Public Distribution System (TPDS) w.e.f. 6.8.2002. Only good quality foodgrains conforming to Prevention of Food Adulteration Act (PFA) norms are issued to the States and Union Territories for distribution under TPDS and Other Welfare Schemes.

The following steps have been taken by the Government to ensure that only good quality foodgrains are distributed:

(i) Ample opportunities are provided to the officials of the State Government/UT Administrations to inspect the stocks prior to lifting from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns.

(ii) Instructions have been issued to all the State Governments/UT Administrations that an officer not below the rank of Inspector should be deputed to check the quality of foodgrains before lifting from the FCI godowns.

(iii) The samples of foodgrains are to be jointly drawn and sealed by the officers of the State Governments/UT Administrations and the FCI from the stocks for display at the counters of Fair Price Shops (FPSs) for the benefit of consumers.

(iv) The officers of the State Governments' and the Ministry pay surprise checks of the FPSs, to over see the quality of foodgrains being distributed through TPDS.

(v) The officers of the Department designated as 'Area officers' for monitoring the TPDS work in the respective States also undertake visits to the storage depots and the FPSs, during their visit to the States to check the quality of foodgrains being issued.

BPL families

928. SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of BPL families and the percentage thereof all over the country;

(b) the number of times the rates of ration materials have been increased since 1 st January, 2001;

(c) the present stock of foodgrains in the Central godowns; and

(d) the reasons for increasing the price-rate of ration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI U.V. KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) The total number of BPL families in the country is 652.03 lakh as on 1.3.2000 as per the population projections of the Registrar General of India. This represents 36% of the total number of families in the country.

(b) and (d) The Central Issue Prices of foodgrains issued under PDS for BPL and Antyodaya Anna Yojana have not been increased since 01.01.2001.

After 1.1.2001, the retail issue price of sugar through PDS has been increased twice, on 1.3.2001 (Rs. 1325/-per qtl.) and on 1.3.2002 (Rs. 1350/-per qtl.). The reason for increasing the price of sugar issued through PDS was to reduce the burden of subsidy on the exchequer.

The total stocks of stocks of foodgrains in Central Pool as on 1.11.2002 held by FCI and State agencies are 535.70 lakh tonnes.

Godowns in Himachal Pradesh

929. SHRI ANIL SHARMA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any proposal from Himachal Pradesh for opening of separate godowns in Lahaul Spiti, Kalpa and other far flung snow bound areas in the State;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what action Government have taken/propose to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI U.V. KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) No, Sir.

(b)and (c) Do not arise.